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LETTERS TO HIS SON

LORD CHESTERFIELD

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E. ODMARPEL

CHESTERFIELD'S
Letters
to His Son.

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Prefatory Remarks

PHILIP DORMER STANHOPE, Earl of Chesterfield, 1694-1773, has had the fate of being generally misunderstood. Doctor Johnson, then Mr., a poor scholar but in the prime of life, seems to have mistaken a delay in an interview, and to have abused his lordship very soundly ever afterward, although on Chesterfield's side there was not wanting a most gracious movement toward reconciliation where no offence had been given. To this misconception we owe one of the finest and manliest letters ever written; but we cannot overlook the blunder.

Received 22 March, 1946 Pond est. 1900

After this, too, came the condemnation of the celebrated letters, — a savage epigram, only partially true, and redeemed by a more favourable criticism. If Mr. Dickens painted — as it has been said he did — Sir John Chester from Lord Chesterfield, he equally mistook the man; and we are sorry to add to this list of those who have followed Johnson's lead, Mrs. Oliphant, in her recent admirable "Historical Sketches."

The simple truth is, that men are to be judged by the places, temper of the times, nay, even the very atmosphere which surrounds them, — and Chesterfield lived in a lax, immoral time, when a mistress was as well recognised in polite society as a concubine was in the days of King David. The *Cupidon*

déchainé at The Hague, a beautiful young lady, a governess or *dame de compagnie*, set her wits against his, and suffered the usual penalty; she fell, and this son to whom these letters are written was the result. But if Chesterfield was not a Christian gentleman, he was in some sense a gentleman; Mademoiselle, or, as she was called, Madame de Bouchet, was always treated with distinguished politeness, and when he died he left her a legacy as some slight recompense for the injury he had done her. He married a lady of blood royal, though crossed by a bar sinister [daughter of George I. and the Duchess of Kendal], and this lady grew very fond of his son Philip and respectfully greeted the mother; and for this son more than a thousand letters attest the

father's affection; he is placed under the care of an excellent clergyman, he is urged to pay the greatest attention to his mother, to his tutor, to his morals, to his upright, straightforward behaviour, to his honesty. "I don't speak of religion," writes his father, "I am not in a position to do so; the excellent Mr. Harte will do that." We don't defend Chesterfield's faults, but we must speak for his virtues. Not one father in ten thousand, in those days, was so good, so tender, and so wise; his son grew up to marry a lady of whom his father knew nothing till a widow and two children came as suppliants, in that splendid room in Chesterfield House where the old earl sate in lonely greatness. He forgave the dead son's offence, and behaved

most generously to the children, two boys, whom he educated.

Mrs. Eugenia Stanhope, the widow of the recipient of these letters, sold them, enhanced in value from the earl's literary reputation, for £1,500! an immense sum in those days. From the two quartos of large margin and printing, this compact volume is condensed. All that has been left out are lessons in Greek and Roman history, mythology, German history, and such matters as might be written to a child. Thence, even, if a sentence occurs worth preserving, it has been picked out. Let us not forget that the Earl of Chesterfield — who writes much as did Mr. Thackeray in his letter to Brown the Younger — tells his son that he always frequented the company

of his superiors; and his superiors he reckoned not only by their rank. "Doctor Swift and Mr. Pope," he says, "condescended to admit me into their company, and, though they had no titles, and I was an earl, I always felt that I was obliged by their politeness, and was favoured by being allowed to converse with them." Are there many noblemen who would say so nowadays? No, nor many Popes nor Swifts, — nor, let us add, Chesterfields.

Mr. Stanhope has also been very much misrepresented. He has been called a cub, a bear, and an awkward lout. Actually, he was a learned, skilful diplomatist, for which profession, be it remembered, his father *specially* educated him. He was a manly, stout-built Englishman, not a dancing-master,

and to lack grace was his only fault. Subjective and brilliant writers of history have polished Mr. Stanhope with a black-lead brush to suit their purposes, but these brilliant fellows are, as usual, false. James Boswell, the biographer, who knew him, says truly enough, "Mr. Stanhope's character has been unjustly represented as being diametrically opposite to what Lord Chesterfield wished him to be. He has been called dull, gross, and awkward; but I knew him at Dresden, when he was envoy to that court, and though he could not boast of the graces, he was, in fact, a sensible, civil, well-behaved man." Other persons, and more than one lady in these pages, speak much more highly than Boswell does of him.

But the chief defence of both father and son lies in the following pages. The Editor of the "Remarque Series" believes that such a book is eminently needed by the present age, and that this book is wonderfully well fitted for what is known in literary slang as the "Period." Higher morality is to be had, but is not read; this honest worldling will speak to the hearts of those who are already set upon the world, will guide them rightly, according to his lights, will leave them at a higher stage, and will perhaps astonish them when they reflect that in outward result the teachings of this adroit and cunning courtier and man of the world, and of the too often despised preacher, are the same.

J. H. F.

Selections from
Lord Chesterfield's Letters

Selections from Lord Chesterfield's Letters

THE ART OF SPEAKING. — You cannot but be convinced that a man who speaks and writes with elegance and grace; who makes choice of good words; and adorns and embellishes the subject upon which he either speaks or writes, will persuade better, and succeed more easily in obtaining what he wishes, than a man who does not explain himself clearly; speaks his language ill; or makes use of low and vulgar expressions; and who has neither grace nor elegance in anything

that he says. Now it is by rhetoric that the art of speaking eloquently is taught: and, though I cannot think of grounding you in it as yet, I would wish, however, to give you an idea of it suitable to your age.[1]

The first thing you should attend to is to speak whatever language you do speak, in its greatest purity, and according to the rules of grammar; for we must never offend against grammar, nor make use of words which are not really words. This is not all; for not to speak ill, is not sufficient; we must

[1] In a previous letter, which has been lost, Chesterfield has been teaching rhetoric to a boy of about seven years old, for, referring to it, he says: "En vérité je crois que vous êtes le premier garçon â qui, *avant l'âge de huit ans*, on ait jamais parlé des figures de la rhétorique, comme j'ai fait dans ma dernière."

speak well; and the best method of attaining to that is to read the best authors with attention; and to observe how people of fashion speak, and those who express themselves best; for shopkeepers, common people, footmen, and maid servants, all speak ill. [*Bath*, *Oct.* 17, 1739.]

ORATORY. — The business of oratory is to persuade people; and you easily feel that to please people is a great step toward persuading them. You must, then, consequently be sensible how advantageous it is for a man who speaks in public, whether it be in Parliament, in the pulpit, or at the bar (that is, in the courts of law), to please his hearers so much as to gain their attention: which he can never do without the help of oratory. It is not

enough to speak the language he speaks in its utmost purity, and according to the rules of grammar; but he must speak it elegantly; that is, he must choose the best and most expressive words, and put them in the best order. He should likewise adorn what he says by proper metaphors, similes, and other figures of rhetoric; and he should enliven it, if he can, by quick and sprightly turns of wit. [*November*, 1739.]

The Folly of Ignorance. — An ignorant man is insignificant and contemptible; nobody cares for his company, and he can just be said to live, and that is all. There is a very pretty French epigram upon the death of such an ignorant, insignificant fellow, the sting of which is that all that can be

said of him is that he was once alive, and that he is now dead. This is the epigram, which you may get by heart:

"Colas est mort de maladie,
Tu veux que j'en pleure le sort,
Que diable veux-tu que j'en dis?
Colas vivoit, Colas est mort."

Take care not to deserve the name of Colas;[1] which I shall certainly give you, if you do not learn well. [*No date.*]

THE REWARD OF VIRTUE. — If a virtuous man be ever so poor or unfortunate in the world, still his virtue is his own reward and will comfort him under his afflictions. The quiet and

[1] We learn by a subsequent reference that the little fellow wished not to be called Colas, but Polyglot, from knowing already three or four languages.

satisfaction of his conscience make him cheerful by day and sleep sound of nights; he can be alone with pleasure and is not afraid of his own thoughts. Besides this, he is esteemed and respected; for even the most wicked people themselves cannot help admiring and respecting virtue in others. A poet says:

"Ipsa quidem virtus, sibimet pulcherrima merces." [1]

Politeness a Necessity. — Know, then, that as learning, honour, and

[1] So also Home:

"Amen! and virtue is its own reward."
— *Douglas*, Act iii. Sc. 1.

And Claudian, quoted by Chesterfield,

"Ipsa quidem virtus pretium sibi, solaque latè Fortunæ secura nitet," etc.

virtue are absolutely necessary to gain you the esteem and admiration of mankind, politeness and good breeding are equally necessary, to make you welcome and agreeable in conversation, and common life. Great talents, such as honour, virtue, learning, and parts, are above the generality of the world; who neither possess them themselves, nor judge of them rightly in others: but all people are judges of the lesser talents, such as civility, affability, and an obliging, agreeable address and manner; because they feel the good effects of them, as making society easy and pleasing.

YOUTHFUL EMULATION. — This is the last letter I shall write to you as to a little boy; for, to-morrow, if I am not mistaken, you will attain your

ninth year; so that for the future, I shall treat you as a *youth*. You must now commence a different course of life, a different course of studies. No more levity; childish toys and play-things must be thrown aside, and your mind directed to serious objects. What was not unbecoming of a child would be disgraceful to a youth. Wherefore, endeavour, with all your might, to show a suitable change; and, by learning, good manners, politeness, and other accomplishments, to surpass those youths of your own age, whom hitherto you have surpassed when boys.[1] May the Almighty preserve

[1] Written in Latin. *Philippus Chesterfield, Philippo Stanhope adhuc puerulo, sed cras e pueritiâ egressuro. S. D.* Dated, Kalend, Maii, 1741.

you and bestow on you his choicest blessings.

MANNER — ABSENCE — AWKWARDNESS — ATTENTION. — However trifling a genteel manner may sound, it is of very great consequence toward pleasing in private life, especially the women; which (*sic*), one time or other, you will think worth pleasing: and I have known many a man, from his awkwardness, give people such a dislike of him at first, that all his merit could not get the better of it afterward. Whereas a genteel manner prepossesses people in your favour, bends them towards you, and makes them wish to like you. Awkwardness can proceed but from two causes; either from not having kept good company, or from not having attended to it. As for your

keeping good company, I will take care of that; do you take care to observe their ways and manners, and to form your own upon them. Attention is absolutely necessary for this, as indeed it is for everything else; and a man without attention is not fit to live in the world. When an awkward fellow first comes into a room, it is highly probable that his sword gets between his legs, and throws him down, or makes him stumble at least; when he has recovered this accident, he goes and places himself in the very place of the whole room where he should not; there he soon lets his hat fall down, and, in taking it up again, throws down his cane; in recovering his cane, his hat falls a second time; so that he is a quarter of an hour before he is in order

again. If he drinks tea or coffee, he certainly scalds his mouth, and lets either the cup or the saucer fall, and spills the tea or coffee in his breeches. At dinner, his awkwardness distinguishes itself particularly, as he has more to do; there he holds his knife, fork, and spoon differently from other people; eats with his knife to the great danger of his mouth, picks his teeth with his fork, and puts his spoon, which has been in his throat twenty times, into the dishes again. If he is to carve, he can never hit the joint; but, in his vain efforts to cut through the bone, scatters the sauce in everybody's face. He generally daubs himself with soup and grease, though his napkin is commonly stuck through a buttonhole, and tickles his chin. When he drinks, he infalli-

bly coughs in his glass, and besprinkles the company. Besides all this, he has strange tricks and gestures; such as snuffing up his nose, making faces, putting his fingers in his nose, or blowing it and looking afterward in his handkerchief, so as to make the company sick. His hands are troublesome to him, when he has not something in them, and he does not know where to put them; but they are in perpetual motion between his bosom and his breeches; he does not wear his clothes, and, in short, does nothing like other people. All this, I own, is not in any degree criminal; but it is highly disagreeable and ridiculous in company, and ought most carefully to be avoided by whoever desires to please.

From this account of what you

should not do, you may easily judge what you should do; and a due attention to the manners of people of fashion, and who have seen the world, will make it habitual and familiar to you.

There is, likewise, an awkwardness of expression and words, most carefully to be avoided; such as false English, bad pronunciation, old sayings, and common proverbs; which are so many proofs of having kept bad and low company. For example: if, instead of saying that tastes are different, and that every man has his own peculiar one, you should let off a proverb, and say that "what is one man's meat is another man's poison;" or else, "Every one as they like, as the good man said when he kissed his cow;" everybody would be persuaded that you had never

kept company with anybody above footmen and housemaids.

Attention will do all this; and without attention nothing is to be done; want of attention, which is really want of thought, is either folly or madness. You should not only have attention to everything, but a quickness of attention, so as to observe, at once, all the people in the room; their motions, their looks, and their words; and yet without staring at them, and seeming to be an observer. This quick and unobserved observation is of infinite advantage in life, and is to be acquired with care; and, on the contrary, what is called absence, which is a thoughtlessness and want of attention about what is doing, makes a man so like either a fool or a madman, that, for my part, I see no real

difference. A fool never has thought, a madman has lost it; and an absent man is, for the time, without it.[1] [*Dated Spa, July* 25, *N. S.* 1741.]

KEEP YOUR WORD. — I am sure you know that breaking of your word is a folly, a dishonour, and a crime. It is folly, because nobody will trust you afterward; and it is both a dishonour and a crime, truth being the first duty of religion and morality: and whoever has not truth cannot be supposed to have any one good quality, and must

[1] In the compilation called "Lord Chesterfield's Maxims," wherein part of this letter is given, all the characteristic points are left out. Thus, where Chesterfield reminds his son that manner is of consequence in pleasing, *especially the women*, the purist has excised the words in italics. In the Remarque editions the very words of the authors are scrupulously given.

become the detestation of God and man. Therefore, I expect, from your truth and your honour, that you will do that which, independently of your promise, your own interest and ambition ought to incline you to do; that is, to excel in everything you undertake. When I was of your age, I should have been ashamed if any boy of that age had learned his book better, or played at any play better than I did; and I would not have rested a moment till I had got before him. Julius Cæsar, who had a noble thirst of glory, used to say that he would rather be the first in a village, than the second in Rome; and he even cried when he saw the statue of Alexander the Great, with the reflection of how much more glory Alexander had acquired, at thirty years

old, than he at a much more advanced age. These are the sentiments to make people considerable; and those who have them not will pass their lives in obscurity and contempt; whereas those who endeavour to excel all, are at least sure of excelling a great many. [*June*, 1742.]

Good Breeding. — Though I need not tell one of your age,[1] experience, and knowledge of the world how necessary good breeding is, to recommend one to mankind; yet, as your various occupations of Greek and cricket, Latin and pitch-farthing, may possibly divert your attention from this object, I take the liberty of reminding you of it, and desiring you to be very well-bred at

[1] His lordship's badinage, or it may be sarcasm, which the little boy quickly perceived.

Lord Orrery's. It is good breeding alone that can prepossess people in your favour at first sight; more time being necessary to discover greater talents. This good breeding, you know, does not consist in low bows and formal ceremony; but in an easy, civil, and respectful behaviour. You will therefore take care to answer with complaisance, when you are spoken to; to place yourself at the lower end of the table, unless bid to go higher; to drink first to the lady of the house, and next to the master; not to eat awkwardly or dirtily; not to sit when others stand; and to do all this with an air of complaisance, and not with a grave, sour look, as if you did it at all unwillingly. [*No date*, *Letter* 70.]

LETTER WRITING. — Let your letter be written as accurately as you are able — I mean with regard to language, grammar, and stops; for as to the *matter* of it the less trouble you give yourself the better it will be. Letters should be easy and natural, and convey to the persons to whom we send them, just what we should say to the persons if we were with them. [*No date*, *Letter* 72.]

DANCING TRIFLING. — Dancing is in itself a very trifling, silly thing; but it is one of those established follies to which people of sense are sometimes obliged to conform; and then they should be able to do it well. And, though I would not have you a dancer, yet, when you do dance, I would have you dance well, as I would have you do everything you do, well. There is no

one thing so trifling, but which (if it is to be done at all) ought to be done well. And I have often told you that I wished you even played at pitch, and cricket, better than any boy at Westminster. For instance: dress is a very foolish thing; and yet it is a very foolish thing for a man not to be well dressed, according to his rank and way of life; and it is so far from being a disparagement to any man's understanding, that it is rather a proof of it, to be as well dressed as those whom he lives with: the difference in this case between a man of sense and a fop is, that the fop values himself upon his dress; and the man of sense laughs at it, at the same time that he knows he must not neglect it; there are a thousand foolish customs of this kind, which not being

criminal must be complied with, and even cheerfully, by men of sense. Diogenes the cynic was a wise man for despising them, but a fool for showing it. Be wiser than other people if you can, but do not tell them so. [*Dublin Castle Nov.* 19, 1745.[1]]

The Well-bred Man — Feels himself firm and easy in all companies; is modest without being bashful, and steady without being impudent: if he is a stranger, he observes, with care, the manners and ways of the people the most esteemed at that place, and conforms to them with complaisance. Instead of finding fault with the customs of that place, and telling the people that the English ones are a thousand times better (as my country-

[1] His lordship was then Viceroy of Ireland.

men are very apt to do), he commends their table, their dress, their houses, and their manners, a little more, it may be, than he really thinks they deserve. But this degree of complaisance is neither criminal nor abject, and is but a small price to pay for the good will and affection of the people you converse with. As the generality of people are weak enough to be pleased with these little things, those who refuse to please them, so cheaply, are, in my mind, weaker than they. [*Same month*, *O. S.*, 1746.]

"L'Art de Plaire." — There is a very pretty little French book, written by L'Abbé de Bellegarde, entitled "*L'Art de Plaire dans la Conversation ;*" [1]

[1] A good-natured but somewhat silly book, in which M. L'Abbé instructs certain young ladies

and, though I confess that it is impossible to reduce the art of pleasing to a system, yet this principle I will lay down, that the desire of pleasing is at least half the art of doing it; the rest depends only upon the manner which attention, observation, and frequenting good company will teach. But if you are lazy, careless, and indifferent whether you please or not, depend upon it you never will please. [*Same date.*]

INTROSPECTION. — You must look into people, as well as at them. Almost all people are born with all the passions, to a certain degree; but almost every man has a prevailing one, to which the others are ordinate. Search every

and gentlemen by the means of sundry conversations and reflections.

one for that ruling passion; pry into the recesses of his heart, and observe the different workings of the same passion in different people. And, when you have found out the prevailing passion of any man, remember never to trust him, where that passion is concerned. Work upon him by it, if you please; but be upon your guard yourself against it, whatever professions he may make you. [*November*, 1746.]

How to Dress. — Take great care always to be dressed like the reasonable people of your own age, in the place where you are; whose dress is never spoken of one way or another, as either too negligent or too much studied. [*Same date.*]

Absent People. — What is commonly called an absent man is

commonly either a very weak or a very affected man; but be he which he will, he is, I am sure, a very disagreeable man in company. He fails in all the common offices of civility; he seems not to know those people to-day, with whom yesterday he appeared to live in intimacy. He takes no part in the general conversation; but, on the contrary, breaks into it, from time to time, with some start of his own, as if he waked from a dream. This (as I said before) is a sure indication, either of a mind so weak that it is not able to bear above one object at a time; or so affected, that it would be supposed to be wholly engrossed by, and directed to, some very great and important objects. Sir Isaac Newton, Mr. Locke, and (it may be) five or

six more, since the creation of the world, may have had a right to absence, from that intense thought which the things they were investigating required. But if a young man, and a man of the world, who has no such avocations to plead, will claim and exercise that right of absence in company, his pretended right should, in my mind, be turned into an involuntary absence, by his perpetual exclusion out of company. [*Ibid.*]

Flattery. — Most people (I might say all people) have their weaknesses; they have their aversions and their likings, to such and such things; so that, if you were to laugh at a man for his aversion to a cat, or cheese (which are common antipathies), or, by inattention and negligence, to let

them come in his way, where you could prevent it, he would, in the first case, think himself insulted, and, in the second, slighted; and would remember both. Whereas your care to procure for him what he likes, and to remove from him what he hates, shows him that he is at least an object of your attention; flatters his vanity, and makes him possibly more your friend than a more important service would have done. With regard to women, attentions still below these are necessary, and, by the custom of the world, in some measure due, according to the laws of good breeding.

Employment of Time. — I hope you employ your whole time, which few people do; and that you put every moment to profit of some kind or

other. I call company, walking, riding, etc., employing one's time, and, upon proper occasions, very usefully; but what I cannot forgive, in anybody, is sauntering, and doing nothing at all with a thing so precious as time, and so irrecoverable when lost. [*Dec.* 9, *O. S.*, 1746.]

VIRTUE AND GOLD. — Virtue and learning, like gold, have their intrinsic value; but if they are not polished, they certainly lose a great deal of their lustre: and even polished brass will pass upon more people than rough gold. What a number of sins does the cheerful, easy good breeding of the French frequently cover? Many of them want common sense, many more common learning; but, in general, they make up so much by their manner for these

defects, that, frequently, they pass undiscovered. I have often said, and do think, that a Frenchman, who, with a fund of virtue, learning, and good sense, has the manners and good breeding of his country, is the perfection of human nature. [*March*, 1747.]

GAMBLING. — The same as to gaming. I did not want money; and, consequently, had no occasion to play for it; but I thought play another necessary ingredient in the composition of a man of pleasure, and accordingly I plunged into it, without desire, at first; sacrificed a thousand real pleasures to it; and made myself solidly uneasy by it, for thirty the best years of my life.

I was even absurd enough, for a little while, to swear, by way of adorning and completing the shining character which

I affected; but this folly I soon laid aside upon finding both the guilt and indecency of it.

Thus seduced by fashion, and blindly adopting nominal pleasures, I lost real ones; and my fortune impaired, and my constitution shattered, are, I must confess, the just punishment of my errors.

Take warning, then, by them; choose your pleasures for yourself, and do not let them be imposed upon you. Follow nature, and not fashion; weigh the present enjoyment of your pleasures, against the necessary consequences of them, and then let your own common sense determine your choice. [*March 27, 1747.*]

Personal Cleanliness. — As you must attend to your manners, so you

must not neglect your person; but take care to be very clean, well dressed, and genteel; to have no disagreeable attitudes, nor awkward tricks; which many people use themselves to, and then cannot leave them off. Do you take care to keep your teeth very clean, by washing them constantly every morning, and after every meal? This is very necessary, both to preserve your teeth a great while, and to save you a great deal of pain. Mine have plagued me long, and are now falling out, merely for want of care when I was of your age. Do you dress well, and not too well? Do you consider your air and manner of presenting yourself, enough, and not too much? neither negligent nor stiff. All these things deserve a degree of care, a second-rate attention; they give

an additional lustre to real merit. My Lord Bacon says that a pleasing figure is a perpetual letter of recommendation. It is certainly an agreeable forerunner of merit, and smooths the way for it. [*July* 30, 1747.]

Lying. — I really know nothing more criminal, more mean, and more ridiculous, than lying. It is the production either of malice, cowardice, or vanity; and generally misses of its aim in every one of these views; for lies are always detected, sooner or later. If I tell a malicious lie, in order to affect any man's fortune or character, I may indeed injure him for some time, but I shall be sure to be the greatest sufferer myself at last; for as soon as ever I am detected (and detected I most certainly shall be), I am blasted for the

infamous attempt; and whatever is said afterward, to the disadvantage of that person, however true, passes for calumny. If I lie, or equivocate, for it is the same thing, in order to excuse myself for something that I have said or done, and to avoid the danger or the shame that I apprehend from it, I discover at once my fear, as well as my falsehood; and only increase, instead of avoiding the danger and the shame; I show myself to be the lowest and the meanest of mankind, and am sure to be always treated as such. Remember as long as you live, that nothing but strict truth can carry you through the world with either your conscience or your honour unwounded. It is not only your duty, but your interest; as a proof of which, you may always observe that

the greatest fools are the greatest liars; For my own part, I judge of every man's truth by his degree of understanding. [*Sept.* 21, 1747.]

Good Breeding. — Civility, which is a disposition to accommodate and oblige others, is essentially the same in every country; but good breeding, as it is called, which is the manner of exerting that disposition, is different in almost every country, and merely local; and every man of sense imitates and conforms to that local good breeding of the place which he is at. A conformity and flexibility of manners is necessary in the course of the world; that is, with regard to all things which are not wrong in themselves. The *versatile ingenium* is the most useful of all. It can turn itself instantly from one ob-

ject to another, assuming the proper manner for each. It can be serious with the grave, cheerful with the gay, and trifling with the frivolous. Endeavour, by all means, to acquire this talent, for it is a very great one. [*Oct.* 2, 1747.]

Good Company. — There are two sorts of good company; one, which is called the *beau monde*, and consists of those people who have the lead in courts, and in the gay part of life; the other consists of those who are distinguished by some peculiar merit, or who excel in some particular and valuable art or science. For my own part, I used to think myself in company as much above me, when I was with Mr. Addison and Mr. Pope, as if I had been with all the princes in Europe. What

I mean by low company, which should by all means be avoided, is the company of those, who, absolutely insignificant and contemptible in themselves, think they are honoured by being in your company, and who flatter every vice and every folly you have, in order to engage you to converse with them. The pride of being the first of the company is but too common; but it is very silly, and very prejudicial. Nothing in the world lets down a character more than that wrong turn.

You may possibly ask me, whether a man has it always in his power to get into the best company? and how? I say, yes, he has, by deserving it; provided he is but in circumstances which enable him to appear upon the footing of a gentleman. Merit and good breed-

ing will make their way everywhere. Knowledge will introduce him, and good breeding will endear him to the best companies; for, as I have often told you, politeness and good breeding are absolutely necessary to adorn any, or all, other good qualities or talents. Without them, no knowledge, no perfection whatsoever, is seen in its best light. The scholar, without good breeding, is a pedant; the philosopher, a cynic; the soldier, a brute; and every man disagreeable. [*Oct.* 9, 1747.]

Busy Idleness. — There are a great many people, who think themselves employed all day, and who, if they were to cast up their accounts at night, would find that they had done just nothing. They have read two or three hours, mechanically, without attending

to what they read, and, consequently, without either retaining it or reasoning upon it. From thence they saunter into company, without taking any part in it, and without observing the characters of the persons, or the subjects of the conversation; but are either thinking of some trifle, foreign to the present purpose, or, often, not thinking at all; which silly and idle suspension of thought they would dignify with the name of *absence* and *distraction*. They go afterward, it may be, to the play, where they gape at the company and the lights; but without minding the very thing they went to, the play. [*Oct.* 30, 1747.]

Action! Action! — Remember the *hoc age:* do what you are about, be that what it will; it is either worth doing

well, or not at all. Wherever you are, have (as the low, vulgar expression is) your ears and your eyes about you. Listen to everything that is said, and see everything that is done. Observe the looks and countenances of those who speak, which is often a surer way of discovering the truth, than from what they say. [*Same date.*]

Value of Time. — I knew, once, a very covetous, sordid fellow, who used frequently to say, "Take care of the pence, for the pounds will take care of themselves." This was a just and sensible reflection in a miser. I recommend to you to take care of minutes; for hours will take care of themselves. I am very sure that many people lose two or three hours every day, by not taking care of the minutes. Never

think any portion of time, whatsoever, too short to be employed; something or other may always be done in it. [*Nov.* 6, 1747.]

The Time to Learn. — Remember that whatever knowledge you do not solidly lay the foundation of before you are eighteen, you will never be master of while you breathe. [*Dec.* 11, 1747.]

Knowledge. — Knowledge is a comfortable and necessary retreat and shelter for us in an advanced age; and if we do not plant it while young, it will give us no shade when we grow old. [*Same date.*]

Polish. — Now, though I would not recommend to you, to go into women's company in search of solid knowledge or judgment, yet it has its use in other respects; for it certainly polishes the

manners, and gives *une certain tournure*, which is very necessary in the course of the world, and which Englishmen have generally less of than any people in the world. [*Jan.* 2, 1748.]

THOROUGHNESS.—Whatever you do, do it to the purpose; do it thoroughly, not superficially. Go to the bottom of things. Anything half done, or half known, is, in my mind, neither done nor known at all. Nay, worse, for it often misleads. There is hardly any place, or any company, where you may not gain knowledge, if you please; almost everybody knows some one thing, and is glad to talk upon that one thing. [*Feb.* 16, 1748.]

PROPER INQUISITIVENESS.—Seek, and you will find, in this world, as well as in the next. See everything, inquire

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into everything; and you may excuse your curiosity and the questions you ask, which otherwise might be thought impertinent, by your manner of asking them; for most things depend a great deal upon the manner. As, for example, *I am afraid that I am very troublesome with my questions; but nobody can inform me so well as you;* or something of that kind. [*Same date.*]

Religion to Be Respected. — But when you frequent places of public worship, as I would have you go to all the different ones you meet with, remember, that, however erroneous, they are none of them objects of laughter and ridicule. Honest error is to be pitied, not ridiculed. The object of all the public worships in the world is the same; it is that great

eternal Being who created everything. The different manners of worship are by no means subjects of ridicule. Each sect thinks its own the best; and I know no infallible judge, in this world, to decide which is the best. [*Same date.*]

USE A NOTE-BOOK. — Make the same inquiries, wherever you are, concerning the revenues, the military establishment, the trade, the commerce, and the police of every country. And you would do well to keep a blank paper book, which the Germans call an *album*; and there, instead of desiring, as they do, every fool they meet with to scribble something, write down all these things, as soon as they come to your knowledge from good authorities. [*Same date.*]

Lord Chesterfield's Care. — I have now but one anxiety left, which is, concerning you. I would have you be, what I know nobody is, perfect. As that is impossible, I would have you as near perfection as possible. I know nobody in a fairer way toward it than yourself, if you please. Never were so much pains taken for anybody's education as for yours; and never had anybody those opportunities of knowledge and improvement which you have had, and still have. I hope, I wish, I doubt, and I fear alternately. This only I am sure of, that you will prove either the greatest pain, or the greatest pleasure of, yours always truly. [*Same date.*]

How "to Wear" Learning. — Wear your learning, like your watch,

in a private pocket; and do not pull it out and strike it, merely to show that you have one. If you are asked what o'clock it is, tell it, but do not proclaim it hourly and unasked, like the watchman. [*Feb.* 22, 1748.]

The Folly of Laughter. — Having mentioned laughing, I must particularly warn you against it; and I could heartily wish that you may often be seen to smile, but never heard to laugh, while you live. Frequent and loud laughter is the characteristic of folly and ill manners: it is the manner in which the mob express their silly joy, at silly things; and they call it being merry. In my mind, there is nothing so illiberal and so ill-bred, as audible laughter. True wit, or sense, never yet made anybody laugh; they are

above it: they please the mind, and give a cheerfulness to the countenance. But it is low buffoonery, or silly accidents, that always excite laughter; and that is what people of sense and breeding should show themselves above. A man's going to sit down, in the supposition that he has a chair behind him, and falling down upon his breech for want of one, sets a whole company a-laughing, when all the wit in the world would not do it; a plain proof, in my mind, how low and unbecoming a thing laughter is. Not to mention the disagreeble noise it makes, and the shocking distortion of the face that it occasions. Laughter is easily restrained, by a very little reflection; but, as it is generally connected with the idea of gaiety, people do not enough attend

to its absurdity. I am neither of a melancholy, nor a cynical disposition, and am as willing and as apt to be pleased as anybody; but I am sure that, since I have had the full use of my reason, nobody has ever heard me laugh. [*March* 9, 1748.]

The Mind. — It requires, also, a great deal of exercise, to bring it to a state of health and vigour. Observe the difference there is between minds cultivated and minds uncultivated, and you will, I am sure, think that you cannot take too much pains, nor employ too much of your time, in the culture of your own. A drayman is probably born with as good organs as Milton, Locke, or Newton; but, by culture, they are much more above him than he is above his horse.

Sometimes, indeed, extraordinary geniuses have broken out by the force of nature, without the assistance of education; but those instances are too rare for anybody to trust to; and even they would make a much greater figure, if they had the advantage of education into the bargain. [*April* 1, 1748.]

CHESTERFIELD'S PROPOSED AIM. — The end which I propose by your education, and which (if you please) I shall certainly attain, is to unite in you the knowledge of a scholar, with the manners of a courtier; and to join, what is seldom joined in any of my countrymen, books and the world. They are commonly twenty years old before they have spoken to anybody above their schoolmaster, and the fellows of their college. If they happen to have learn-

ing, it is only Greek and Latin; but not one word of modern history, or modern languages. Thus prepared, they go abroad, as they call it; but, in truth they stay at home all that while; for being very awkward, confoundedly ashamed, and not speaking the languages, they go into no foreign company, at least none good; but dine and sup with one another only, at the tavern. Such examples, I am sure, you will not imitate, but even carefully avoid. [*May* 10, 1748.]

Manly Deference to Rank. — People of a low, obscure education cannot stand the rays of greatness; they are frightened out of their wits when kings and great men speak to them; they are awkward, ashamed, and do not know what nor how to answer;

whereas *les honnêtes gens* are not dazzled by superior rank; they know and pay all the respect that is due to it; but they do it without being disconcerted; and can converse just as easily with a king, as with any one of his subjects. That is the great advantage of being introduced young into good company, and being used early to converse with one's superiors. How many men have I seen here, who, after having had the full benefit of an English education first at school, and then at the university, when they have been presented to the king, did not know whether they stood upon their heads or their heels. [*May* 17, 1748.]

Filial Love to the Mother. — You owe her, not only duty, but likewise great obligations, for her care and

tenderness; and consequently, cannot take too many opportunities of showing your gratitude. [1] [*Same date.*]

DIPLOMATIC EDUCATION.—You must absolutely speak all the modern languages, as purely and correctly as the natives of the respective countries; for whoever does not speak a language perfectly and easily, will never appear to advantage in conversation, nor treat with others in it upon equal terms. [*May* 22, 1748.]

ADVANTAGE OF MANNERS. — Manners, though the last, and it may be the least, ingredient of real merit, are, however, very far from being useless in its composition; they adorn, and give an

[1] Lord Chesterfield had been urging his son to send a Dresden tea service to his mother, which he did.

additional force and lustre to both virtue and knowledge. They prepare and smooth the way for the progress of both; and are, I fear, with the bulk of mankind, more engaging than either. Remember, then, the infinite advantage of manners; cultivate and improve your own to the utmost; good sense will suggest the great rules to you, good company will do the rest. [*May* 27, 1748.]

How to Be Considerable. — Upon the whole, if you have a mind to be considerable, and to shine hereafter, you must labour hard now. No quickness of parts, no vivacity, will do long, or go far, without a solid fund of knowledge: and that fund of knowledge will amply repay all the pains that you can take in acquiring it. Reflect

seriously, within yourself, upon all this, and ask yourself, whether I can have any view, but your interest, in all that I recommend to you. [*Same date.*]

ENUNCIATION—ELOQUENCE.—Your figure is a good one; you have no natural defect in the organs of speech; your address may be engaging, and your manner of speaking graceful, if you will; so that, if they are not so, neither I nor the world, can ascribe it to anything but your want of parts. What is the constant and just observation as to all actors upon the stage? Is it not, that those who have the best sense always speak the best, though they may happen not to have the best voices? They will speak plainly, distinctly, and with the proper emphasis, be their voices ever so bad. Had Roscius spoken *quick*,

thick, and *ungracefully*, I will answer for it, that Cicero would not have thought him worth the oration which he made in his favour. Words were given us to communicate our ideas by; and there must be something inconceivably absurd in uttering them in such a manner as that either people cannot understand them, or will not desire to understand them. I tell you truly and sincerely, that I shall judge of your parts by your speaking gracefully or ungracefully. If you have parts, you will never be at rest till you have brought yourself to a habit of speaking most gracefully; for I aver, that it is in your power. [*June* 21, 1748.]

ARTICULATION. — You will take care to open your teeth when you speak; to articulate every word distinctly; and

to beg of Mr. Harte, Mr. Eliot, or whomever you speak to, to remind and stop you, if ever you fall into the rapid and unintelligible mutter. You will even read aloud to yourself, and tune your utterance to your own ear; and read at first much slower than you need to do, in order to correct yourself of that shameful trick of speaking faster than you ought.

DESERT AND REWARD. — Deserve a great deal, and you shall have a great deal; deserve a little, and you shall have but little; and be good for nothing at all, and, I assure you, you shall have nothing at all.

Solid knowledge, as I have often told you, is the first and great foundation of your future fortune and character; for I never mention to you the two much

greater points of religion and morality, because I cannot possibly suspect you as to either of them. [*July* 1, 1748.]

No One Contemptible. — Be convinced that there are no persons so insignificant and inconsiderable, but may, some time or other, and in some thing or other, have it in their power to be of use to you; which they certainly will not, if you have once shown them contempt. [*Same date.*]

The Folly of Contempt. — Wrongs are often forgiven, but contempt never is. Our pride remembers it for ever. It implies a discovery of weaknesses, which we are much more careful to conceal than crimes. Many a man will confess his crimes to a common friend, but I never knew a man who would tell his silly weaknesses

to his most intimate one. As many a friend will tell us our faults without reserve, who will not so much as hint at our follies: that discovery is too mortifying to our self-love, either to tell another, or to be told, of one's self. You must, therefore, never expect to hear of your weaknesses or follies, from anybody but me; those I will take pains to discover, and, whenever I do, shall tell you of them. [*July* 1, 1748.]

Lazy Minds. — There are two sorts of understandings; one of which hinders a man from ever being considerable, and the other commonly makes him ridiculous; I mean the lazy mind, and the trifling, frivolous mind. Yours, I hope, is neither. The lazy mind will not take the trouble of going to the bottom of anything; but, discouraged

by the first difficulties (and everything worth knowing or having is attended with some), stops short, contents itself with easy, and, consequently, superficial knowledge, and prefers a great degree of ignorance to a small degree of trouble. These people either think, or represent, most things as impossible; whereas few things are so, to industry and activity. [*July* 26, 1748.]

Conversation. — When you are in company, bring the conversation to some useful subject, but *à portée* of that company. Points of history, matters of literature, the customs of particular countries, the several orders of knighthood, as Teutonic, Maltese, etc., are surely better subjects of conversation than the weather, dress, or fiddle-faddle stories, that carry no information along

with them. The characters of kings, and great men, are only to be learned in conversation; for they are never fairly written during their lives. [*Same date.*]

Always Ask. — Never be ashamed nor afraid of asking questions; for if they lead to information, and if you accompany them with some excuse, you will never be reckoned an impertinent or rude questioner. All those things, in the common course of life, depend entirely upon the manner; and in that respect the vulgar saying is true, "that one man may better steal a horse, than another look over the hedge." [*Same date.*]

Diet. — Duval tells me that you are pretty fat for one of your age; this you should attend to in a proper way; for if, while very young, you should grow

fat, it would be troublesome, unwholesome, and ungraceful; you should therefore, when you have time, take very strong exercise, and in your diet avoid fattening things. All malt liquors fatten, or at least bloat; and I hope you do not deal much in them. [*Aug.* 2, 1748.]

Buying Books. — Mr. Harte wrote me word some time ago, and Mr. Eliot confirms it now, that you employ your pin-money in a very different manner from that in which pin-money [1] is commonly lavished. Not in gewgaws and baubles, but in buying good and useful books. This is an excellent symptom, and gives me very good hopes. Go on thus, my dear boy, but for these two

[1] A somewhat curious use of the phrase, but well explained by Johnson.

next years, and I ask no more. You must then make such a figure, and such a fortune in the world, as I wish you, and as I have taken all these pains to enable you to do. After that time, I allow you to be as idle as ever you please; because I am sure that you will not then please to be so at all. The ignorant and the weak only are idle; but those who have once acquired a good stock of knowledge, always desire to increase it. Knowledge is like power, in this respect, that those who have the most are most desirous of having more. It does not clog, by possession, but increases desires; which is the case of very few pleasures. [*Aug.* 23, 1848.]

Historical Faith. — Take nothing for granted, upon the bare authority of

the author; but weigh and consider, in your own mind, the probability of the facts, and the justness of the reflections. Consult different authors upon the same facts, and form your opinion upon the greater or lesser degree of probability arising from the whole, which, in my mind, is the utmost stretch of historical faith, certainty (I fear) not being to be found. [*Aug.* 30, 1748.]

LETTERS. — Your letters, except when upon a given subject, are exceedingly laconic, and neither answer my desires, nor the purpose of letters, which should be familiar conversations between absent friends. As I desire to live with you upon the footing of an intimate friend, and not of a parent, I could wish that your letters gave me more particular accounts of yourself

and of your lesser transactions. When you write to me, suppose yourself conversing freely with me, by the fire-side. In that case, you would naturally mention the incidents of the day; as where you had been, whom you had seen, what you thought of them, etc. Do this in your letters; acquaint me sometimes with your studies, sometimes with your diversions; tell me of any new persons and characters that you meet with in company, and add your own observations upon them: in short, let me see more of you, in your letters. [*Sept.* 27, 1748.]

Good Company. — To keep good company, especially at your first setting out, is the way to receive good impressions. If you ask me what I mean by good company, I will confess to

you that it is pretty difficult to define; but I will endeavour to make you understand it as well as I can.

Good company is not what respective sets of company are pleased either to call or think themselves; but it is that company which all the people of the place call, and acknowledge to be good company, notwithstanding some objections which they may form to some of the individuals who compose it. It consists chiefly (but by no means without exception) of people of considerable birth, rank, and character: for people of neither birth nor rank are frequently and very justly admitted into it, if distinguished by any peculiar merit, or eminency in any liberal art or science. Nay, so motley a thing is good company, that

many people, without birth, rank, or merit, intrude into it by their own forwardness, and others slide into it by the protection of some considerable person; and some even of indifferent characters and morals make part of it. But, in the main, the good part preponderates, and people of infamous and blasted characters are never admitted. In this fashionable good company the best manners and the best language of the place are most unquestionably to be learnt; for they establish, and give the tone to both, which are therefore called the language and manners of good company; there being no legal tribunal to ascertain either.

A company consisting wholly of people of the first quality cannot, for

that reason, be called good company, in the common acceptation of the phrase, unless they are, into the bargain, the fashionable and accredited company of the place; for people of the very first quality can be as silly, as ill-bred, and as worthless, as people of the meanest degree. On the other hand, a company consisting entirely of people of very low condition, whatever their merit or parts may be, can never be called good company; and consequently should not be much frequented, though by no means despised.

A company wholly composed of men of learning, though greatly to be valued and respected, is not meant by the words *good company*: they cannot have the easy manners and *tournure* of the world, as they do not live in it.

If you can bear your part well in such a company, it is extremely right to be in it sometimes, and you will be but more esteemed, in other companies, for having a place in that. But then do not let it engross you: for if you do, you will be only considered as one of the *litterati* by profession; which is not the way either to shine or rise in the world.

The company of professed wits and poets is extremely inviting to most young men, who, if they have wit themselves, are pleased with it, and if they have none, are sillily proud of being one of it; but it should be frequented with moderation and judgment, and you should by no means give yourself up to it. A wit is a very unpopular denomination, as it carries terror along

with it; and people in general are as much afraid of a live wit, in company, as a woman is of a gun, which she thinks may go off of itself, and do her a mischief. Their acquaintance is, however, worth seeking, and their company worth frequenting; but not exclusively of others, nor to such a degree as to be considered only as one of that particular set.

But the company which of all others you should most carefully avoid is that low company which, in every sense of the word, is low indeed; low in rank, low in parts, low in manners, and low in merit. [*Oct.* 12, 1748.]

Associates. — There is good sense in the Spanish saying, "Tell me whom you live with, and I will tell you

who you are." Make it, therefore, your business, wherever you are, to get into that company which everybody of the place allows to be the best company, next to their own: which is the best definition that I can give you of good company. But here, too, one caution is very necessary; for want of which many young men have been ruined, even in good company. Good company (as I have before observed) is composed of a great variety of fashionable people, whose characters and morals are very different, though their manners are pretty much the same. When a young man, now in the world, first gets into that company, he very rightly determines to conform to and imitate it. But then he too often, and fatally, mistakes

the object of his imitation. He has often heard that absurd term of genteel and fashionable vices. [*Same date.*]

Behaviour. — Imitate, then, with discernment and judgment, the real perfections of the good company into which you may get; copy their politeness, their carriage, their address, and the easy and well-bred turn of their conversation; but remember, that, let them shine ever so bright, their vices, if they have any, are so many spots, which you would no more imitate than you would make an artificial wart upon your face, because some very handsome man had the misfortune to have a natural one upon his: but, on the contrary, think how much handsomer he would have been without it. [*Same date.*]

Talking. — Talk often, but never long; in that case, if you do not please, at least you are sure not to tire your hearers. Pay your own reckoning, but do not treat the whole company; this being one of the very few cases in which people do not care to be treated, every one being fully convinced that he has wherewithal to pay.

Tell stories very seldom, and absolutely never but where they are very apt, and very short. Omit every circumstance that is not material, and beware of digressions. To have frequent recourse to narrative betrays great want of imagination.

Never hold anybody by the button, or the hand, in order to be heard out; for, if people are not willing to hear

you, you had much better hold your tongue than them.

Most long talkers single out some one unfortunate man in company (commonly him whom they observe to be the most silent, or their next neighbour) to whisper, or at least, in a half voice, to convey a continuity of words to. This is excessively ill-bred, and, in some degree, a fraud, conversation stock being a joint and common property. But, on the other hand, if one of these unmerciful talkers lays hold of you, hear him with patience (and at least seeming attention), if he is worth obliging; for nothing will oblige him more than a patient hearing, as nothing would hurt him more than either to leave him in the midst of his discourse, or

to discover your impatience under your affliction.

Take rather than give, the tone of the company you are in. If you have parts, you will show them, more or less, upon every subject; and if you have not, you had better talk sillily upon a subject of other people's than of your own choosing.

Avoid as much as you can, in mixed companies, argumentative, polemical conversations; which, though they should not, yet certainly do, indispose, for a time, the contending parties toward each other: and, if the controversy grows warm and noisy, endeavour to put an end to it by some genteel levity or joke. I quieted such a conversation hubbub once, by representing to them that, though I was persuaded

none there present would repeat, out of company, what passed in it, yet I could not answer for the discretion of the passengers in the street, who must necessarily hear all that was said.

Above all things, and upon all occasions, avoid speaking of yourself, if it be possible. Such is the natural pride and vanity of our hearts, that it perpetually breaks out, even in people of the best parts, in all the various modes and figures of the egotism. [*Oct.* 19, 1748.]

YOURSELF. — The only sure way of avoiding these evils is, never to speak of yourself at all. But when, historically, you are obliged to mention yourself, take care not to drop one single word that can directly or indirectly be construed as fishing for applause. Be

your character what it will, it will be known; and nobody will take it upon your own word. Never imagine that anything you can say yourself will varnish your defects, or add lustre to your perfections; but, on the contrary, it may, and nine times in ten will, make the former more glaring, and the latter obscure. If you are silent upon your own subject, neither envy, indignation, nor ridicule, will obstruct or allay the applause which you may really deserve; but if you publish your own panegyric, upon any occasion, or in any shape whatsoever, and however artfully dressed or disguised, they will all conspire against you, and you will be disappointed of the very end you aim at. [*Same date.*]

SCANDAL — MIMICRY — SWEARING — LAUGHTER. — Neither retail nor re-

ceive scandal, willingly; for though the defamation of others may, for the present, gratify the malignity of the pride of our hearts, cool reflection will draw very disadvantageous conclusions from such a disposition; and in the case of scandal, as in that of robbery, the receiver is always thought as bad as the thief.

Mimicry, which is the common and favourite amusement of little, low minds, is in the utmost contempt with great ones. It is the lowest and most illiberal of all buffoonery. Pray, neither practise it yourself, nor applaud it in others. Besides that, the person mimicked is insulted; and, as I have often observed to you before, an insult is never forgiven.

I need not (I believe) advise you to

adapt your conversation to the people you are conversing with: for I suppose you would not, without this caution, have talked upon the same subject, and in the same manner, to a minister of state, a bishop, a philosopher, a captain, and a woman. A man of the world must, like the chameleon (*sic*), be able to take every different hue; which is by no means a criminal or abject, but a necessary complaisance, for it relates only to manners, and not to morals.

One word only, as to swearing; and that, I hope and believe, is more than is necessary. You may sometimes hear some people, in good company, interlard their discourse with oaths, by way of embellishment, as they think; but you must observe, too, that those who do so are never those who contribute,

in any degree, to give that company the denomination of good company. They are always subalterns, or people of low education; for that practice, besides that it has no one temptation to plead, is as silly, and as illiberal, as it is wicked.

Loud laughter is the mirth of the mob; who are only pleased with silly things; for true wit or good sense never excited a laugh, since the creation of the world. A man of parts and fashion is therefore only seen to smile, but never heard to laugh.

But, to conclude this long letter; all the above-mentioned rules, however carefully you may observe them, will lose half their effect, if unaccompanied by the Graces. Whatever you say, if you say it with a supercilious, cynical face, or an embarrassed countenance,

or a silly, disconcerted grin, will be ill received. If, into the bargain, *you mutter it, or utter it indistinctly, and ungracefully*, it will be still worse received. If your air and address are vulgar, awkward, and *gauche*, you may be esteemed, indeed, if you have great intrinsic merit; but you will never please: and, without pleasing, you will rise but heavily. Venus, among the ancients, was synonymous with the Graces, who were always supposed to accompany her: and Horace tells us that even Youth and Mercury, the god of arts and eloquence, would not do without her.

"... Parùm comis *sine te Juventas,*
Mercuriusque."

They are not inexorable ladies, and may be had, if properly and dili-

gently pursued. Adieu. [*Oct.* 19, 1748.]

FRIVOLITY. — Little minds mistake little objects for great ones, and lavish away upon the former that time and attention which only the latter deserve. To such mistakes we owe the numerous and frivolous tribe of insect-mongers, shell-mongers, and pursuers and driers of butterflies, etc. The strong mind distinguishes not only between the useful and the useless, but, likewise, between the useful and the curious. He applies himself intensely to the former; he only amuses himself with the latter. Of this little sort of knowledge, which I have just hinted at, you will find, at least, as much as you need wish to know, in a superficial but pretty French book, entitled, "Spectacle de la

Nature;" which will amuse you while you read it, and give you a sufficient notion of the various parts of nature; I would advise you to read it, at leisure hours. [*Dec.* 6, 1748.]

Improvement of Time. — The whole morning, if diligently and attentively devoted to solid studies, will go a great way at the year's end; and the evenings spent in the pleasures of good company will go as far in teaching you a knowledge not much less necessary than the other — I mean the knowledge of the world. Between these two necessary studies, that of books in the morning, and that of the world in the evening, you see that you will not have one minute to squander or slattern away. Nobody ever lent themselves more than I did, when I

was young, to the pleasures and dissipation of good company; I even did it too much. But then, I can assure you that I always found time for serious studies; and, when I could find it no other way, I took it out of my sleep, for I resolved always to rise early in the morning, however late I went to bed at night; and this resolution I have kept so sacred, that, unless when I have been confined to my bed by illness, I have not for more than forty years, ever been in bed at nine o'clock in the morning, but commonly up before eight. [*Dec.* 13, 1748.]

AFFECTATION. — Any affectation whatsoever in dress implies, in my mind, a flaw in the understanding. Most of our young fellows, here, display some character or other by their

dress; some affect the tremendous, and wear a great and fiercely cocked hat, an enormous sword, a short waistcoat, and a black cravat: these I should be almost tempted to swear the peace against, in my own defence, if I were not convinced that they are but meek asses in lions' skins. Others go in brown frocks, leather breeches, great oaken cudgels in their hands, their hats uncocked, and their hair unpowdered; and imitate grooms, stage-coachmen, and country bumpkins so well in their outsides, that I do not make the least doubt of their resembling them equally in their insides. A man of sense carefully avoids any particular character in his dress; he is accurately clean for his own sake; but all the rest is for other people's. He dresses as well, and in

the same manner, as the people of sense and fashion of the place where he is. If he dresses better, as he thinks, that is, more than they, he is a fop; if he dresses worse, he is unpardonably negligent: but, of the two, I would rather have a young fellow too much than too little dressed; the excess on that side will wear off, with a little age and reflection; but if he is negligent at twenty, he will be a sloven at forty, and stink at fifty years old. Dress yourself fine, where others are fine; and plain, where others are plain; but take care, always, that your clothes are well made and fit you, for otherwise they will give you a very awkward air. When you are once well dressed, for the day, think no more of it afterward; and, without any stiffness for fear of

discomposing that dress, let all your motions be as easy and natural as if you had no clothes on at all. So much for dress, which I maintain to be a thing of consequence in the polite world. [*Dec.* 30, 1748.]

A Gentleman's Pleasures.—Dear Boy: — This letter will, I believe, still find you at Venice, in all the dissipation of masquerades, ridottos, operas, etc.: with all my heart; they are decent evening amusements, and very properly succeed that serious application to which I am sure you devote your mornings. There are liberal and illiberal pleasures, as well as liberal and illiberal arts. There are some pleasures that degrade a gentleman, as much as some trades could do. Sottish drinking, indiscriminate gluttony, driving coaches,

rustic sports, such as fox-chases, horse-races, etc., are, in my opinion, infinitely below the honest and industrious professions of a tailor, and a shoemaker, which are said to *déroger*. [*April* 19, 1749.]

Music — Fiddling. — I cannot help cautioning you against giving into those (I will call them illiberal) pleasures (though music is commonly reckoned one of the liberal arts) to the degree that most of your countrymen do, when they travel in Italy. If you love music, hear it; go to operas, concerts, and pay fiddlers to play to you; but I insist upon your neither piping nor fiddling yourself. It puts a gentleman in a very frivolous, contemptible light; brings him into a great deal of bad company; and takes up a great deal of

time, which might be much better employed. Few things would mortify me more, than to see you bearing a part in a concert, with a fiddle under your chin, or a pipe in your mouth. [*April* 19, 1749.]

MANIÈRES. — By *manières*, I do not mean bare common civility; everybody must have that, who would not be kicked out of company: but I mean engaging, insinuating, shining manners; a distinguished politeness, an almost irresistible address; a superior gracefulness in all you say and do. It is this alone that can give all your other talents their full lustre and value; and, consequently, it is this which should now be the principal object of your attention. Observe minutely, wherever you go, the allowed and estab-

lished morals of good breeding, and form yourself upon them. Whatever pleases you most, in others, will infallibly please others, in you. I have often repeated this to you; now is your time of putting it in practice. [*Same date.*]

How to Please. — You must not neglect your dress, neither, but take care to be *bien mis*. Pray send for the best operator for the teeth, at Turin, where I suppose there is some famous one; and let him put yours in perfect order; and then take care to keep them so, afterwards, yourself. You had very good teeth, and I hope they are so still; but even those who have bad ones should keep them clean; for a dirty mouth is, in my mind, ill manners. In short, neglect nothing that can

possibly please. A thousand nameless little things, which nobody can describe, but which everybody feels, conspire to form that *whole* of pleasing; as the several pieces of a mosaic work, though separately of little beauty or value, when properly joined form those beautiful figures which please everybody. A look, a gesture, an attitude, a tone of voice, all bear their parts in the great work of pleasing. The art of pleasing is more particularly necessary in your intended profession, than, perhaps, in any other; it is, in truth, the first half of your business; for if you do not please the court you are sent to, you will be of very little use to the court you are sent from. Please the eyes and the ears, they will introduce you to the heart; and, nine times in ten,

the heart governs the understanding. [*May* 15, 1749.]

FLATTERY. — I recommended to you, in my last, an innocent piece of art; that of flattering people behind their backs, in presence of those who, to make their own court, much more than for your sake, will not fail to repeat, and even amplify the praise to the party concerned. This is, of all flattery, the most pleasing, and consequently the most effectual. There are other, and many other inoffensive arts of this kind, which are necessary in the course of the world, and which he who practises the earliest, will please the most, and rise the soonest. [*May* 22, 1749.]

TEMPER. — The principal of these things, is the mastery of one's tem-

per, and that coolness of mind, and serenity of countenance, which hinders us from discovering, by words, actions, or even looks, those passions or sentiments, by which we are inwardly moved or agitated; and the discovery of which gives cooler and abler people such infinite advantages over us, not only in great business, but in all the most common occurrences of life. A man who does not possess himself enough to hear disagreeable things, without visible marks of anger and change of countenance, or agreeable ones without sudden bursts of joy and expansion of countenance, is at the mercy of every artful knave, or pert coxcomb: the former will provoke or please you by design, to catch unguarded words or looks; by which he will easily

decipher the secrets of your heart, of which you should keep the key yourself, and trust it with no man living. [*May* 22, 1749.]

DISSIMULATION. — It may be objected, that I am now recommending dissimulation to you; I both own and justify it. It has been long said, *Qui nescit dissimulare nescit regnare:* I go still farther, and say that without some dissimulation no business can be carried on at all. It is *simulation* that is false, mean, and criminal: that is the cunning which Lord Bacon calls crooked or left-handed wisdom, and which is never made use of but by those who have not true wisdom. And the same great man says that dissimulation is only to hide our own cards; whereas simulation is put on in order to look

into other people's. Lord Bolingbroke, in his "Idea of a Patriot King," which he has lately published, and which I will send you by the first opportunity, says, very justly, that simulation is a *stiletto;* not only an unjust but an unlawful weapon, and the use of it very rarely to be excused, never justified. Whereas dissimulation is a shield, as secrecy is armour; and it is no more possible to preserve secrecy in business, without some degree of dissimulation, than it is to succeed in business without secrecy. [*Same date.*]

THE EASY MOMENT.—Some people are to be reasoned, some flattered, some intimidated, and some teased into a thing; but, in general, all are to be brought into it at last, if skilfully

applied to, properly managed, and indefatigably attacked in their several weak places. The time should likewise be judiciously chosen: every man has his *mollia tempora*, but that is far from being all day long; and you would choose your time very ill, if you applied to a man about one business, when his head was full of another, or when his heart was full of grief, anger, or any other disagreeable sentiment. [*May* 22, 1749.]

JUDGE OF OTHERS BY YOURSELF.—In order to judge of the inside of others, study your own; for men in general are very much alike; and though one has one prevailing passion, and another has another, yet their operations are much the same; and whatever engages or disgusts, pleases,

or offends you in others will, *mutatis mutandis*, engage, disgust, please, or offend others, in you. [*Same date.*]

Sculpture and Painting. — You will examine, likewise, whether, in their groups, there be a unity of action, or proper relation; a truth of dress and manners. Sculpture and painting are very justly called liberal arts; a lively and strong imagination, together with a just observation, being absolutely necessary to excel in either: which, in my opinion, is by no means the case of music, though called a liberal art, and now in Italy placed even above the other two: a proof of the decline of that country. A taste of sculpture and painting is, in my mind, as becoming as a taste of fiddling and piping is unbecoming a man of fashion. The

former is connected with history and poetry; the latter, with nothing, that I know of, but bad company. [*June* 22, 1749.]

TRIFLES. — Great merit, or great failings, will make you respected or despised; but trifles, little attentions, mere nothings, either done, or neglected, will make you either liked or disliked, in the general run of the world. Examine yourself, why you like such and such people, and dislike such and such others; and you will find that those different sentiments proceed from very slight causes. Moral virtues are the foundation of society in general, and of friendship in particular; but attentions, manners, and graces both adorn and strengthen them. [*July* 20, 1749.]

Earn Your Pleasures. — No man tastes pleasures truly, who does not earn them by previous business; and few people do business well, who do nothing else. Remember, that when I speak of pleasures, I always mean the elegant pleasures of a rational being, and not the brutal ones of a swine. I mean *la bonne chère*, short of gluttony; wine, infinitely short of drunkenness; play, without the least gaming; and gallantry, without debauchery. There is a line in all these things which men of sense, for greater security, take care to keep a good deal on the right side of: for sickness, pain, contempt, and infamy lie immediately on the other side of it. Men of sense and merit in all other respects, may have had some of these failings; but

then those few examples, instead of inviting us to imitation, should only put us the more upon our guard against such weaknesses. Whoever thinks them fashionable will not be so himself. I have often known a fashionable man have some one vice, but I never, in my life, knew a vicious man a fashionable man. Vice is as degrading as it is criminal. God bless you, my dear child! [*Aug.* 7, 1749.]

Dignity of Manners. — There is a certain dignity of manners absolutely necessary, to make even the most valuable character either respected or respectable.

Horse-play, romping, frequent and loud fits of laughter, jokes, waggery, and indiscriminate familiarity, will sink both merit and knowledge into a degree

of contempt. They compose at most a merry fellow; and a merry fellow was never yet a respectable man. Indiscriminate familiarity either offends your superiors, or else dubs you their dependant, and led captain. It gives your inferiors just but troublesome and improper claims of equality. A joker is near akin to a buffoon; and neither of them is the least related to wit. Whoever is admitted or sought for, in company, upon any other account than that of his merit and manners, is never respected there, but only made use of. We will have such-a-one, for he sings prettily; we will invite such-a-one to a ball, for he dances well; we will have such -a-one to supper, for he is always joking and laughing; we will ask another, because he plays deep at all

games, or because he can drink a great deal. These are vilifying distinctions, mortifying preferences, and exclude all ideas of esteem and regard. Whoever *is had* (as it is called) in company, for the sake of any one thing singly, is singly that thing, and will never be considered in any other light; consequently never respected, let his merits be what they will. [*Aug.* 10, 1749.]

Distraction and Inattention. — I know no one thing more offensive to a company than inattention and *distraction*. It is showing them the utmost contempt; and people never forgive contempt. No man is *distrait* with the man he fears, or the woman he loves; which is a proof that every man can get the better of

that *distraction*, when he thinks it worth his while to do so; and, take my word for it, it is always worth his while. For my own part, I would rather be in company with a dead man, than with an absent one; for if the dead man gives me no pleasure, at least he shows me no contempt; whereas the absent man, silently indeed, but very plainly, tells me that he does not think me worth his attention.

BEND TO CEREMONY. — *A propos* of the Pope; remember to be presented to him before you leave Rome, and go through the necessary ceremonies for it, whether of kissing his slipper or his breech; for I would never deprive myself of anything that I wanted to do or see, by refusing to comply with an established custom.

When I was in Catholic countries, I never declined kneeling in their churches at the elevation, nor elsewhere, when the host went by. It is a complaisance due to the custom of the place, and by no means, as some silly people have imagined, an implied approbation of their doctrine. Bodily attitudes and situations are things so very indifferent in themselves, that I would quarrel with nobody about them. [*Sept.* 22, 1749.]

The Vulgar Man. — Trifles. — Vulgarism. — A vulgar man is captious and jealous; eager and impetuous about trifles. He suspects himself to be slighted, thinks everything that is said meant at him; if the company happens to laugh, he is persuaded they laugh at him: he grows angry and

testy, says something very impertinent, and draws himself into a scrape, by showing what he calls a proper spirit, and asserting himself. A man of fashion does not suppose himself to be either the sole or principal object of the thoughts, looks, or words of the company; and never suspects that he is either slighted or laughed at, unless he is conscious that he deserves it. And if (which very seldom happens) the company is absurd or ill-bred enough to do either, he does not care twopence, unless the insult be so gross and plain as to require satisfaction of another kind. As he is above trifles, he is never vehement and eager about them; and, wherever they are concerned, rather acquiesces than wrangles. A vulgar man's conversation always sa-

vours strongly of the lowness of his education and company. It turns chiefly upon his domestic affairs, his servants, the excellent order he keeps in his own family, and the little anecdotes of the neighbourhood; all which he relates with emphasis, as interesting matters. He is a man gossip.

Vulgarism in language is the next, and distinguishing characteristic of bad company, and a bad education. A man of fashion avoids nothing with more care than that. Proverbial expressions, and trite sayings are the flowers of the rhetoric of a vulgar man. Would he say, that men differ in their tastes, he both supports and adorns that opinion, by the good old saying, as he respectfully calls it, that *what is one man's meat is another man's poison.*

If anybody attempts being *smart*, as he calls it, upon him, he gives them *tit for tat*, ay, that he does. He has always some favourite word for the time being, which, for the sake of using often, he commonly abuses. Such as *vastly* angry, *vastly* kind, *vastly* handsome, and *vastly* ugly. Even his pronunciation of proper words carries the mark of the beast along with it. He calls the earth *yearth ;* he is *obleiged*,[1] not *obliged* to you. He goes *to ward*, and not toward such a place. He sometimes affects hard words, by way of ornament, which he always mangles like a learned woman. A man of

[1] As indeed did George III., *teste* the anecdote of Kemble : "Mr. Kemble, *obleige* me with a pinch of snuff." "It would become your Majesty's royal mouth better to say *oblige*."

fashion never has recourse to proverbs and vulgar aphorisms; uses neither favourite words nor hard words; but takes great care to speak very correctly and grammatically, and to pronounce properly; that is, according to the usage of the best companies. [*Sept.* 27, 1749.]

A Father's Object. — Dear Boy: — From the time that you have had life, it has been the principal and favourite object of mine to make you as perfect as the imperfections of human nature will allow: in this view I have grudged no pains nor expense in your education; convinced that education, more than nature, is the cause of that great difference which we see in the characters of men. While you were a child, I endeavoured to form your heart habit-

ually to virtue and honour, before your understanding was capable of showing you their beauty and utility. Those principles, which you then got, like your grammar rules, only by rote, are now, I am persuaded, fixed and confirmed by reason. And indeed they are so plain and clear that they require but a very moderate degree of understanding, either to comprehend or practise them. Lord Shaftesbury says, very prettily, that he would be virtuous for his own sake, though nobody were to know it; as he would be clean for his own sake, though nobody were to see him. I have, therefore, since you have had the use of your reason, never written to you upon those subjects: they speak best for themselves; and I should, now, just as soon think of warn-

ing you gravely not to fall into the dirt or the fire, as into dishonour or vice. [*Nov.* 3, 1749.]

Good Breeding. — A friend of yours and mine has very justly defined good breeding to be *the result of much good sense, some good nature, and a little self-denial for the sake of others, and with a view to obtain the same indulgence from them.* Taking this for granted (as I think it cannot be disputed), it is astonishing to me, that anybody, who has good sense and good nature (and I believe you have both), can essentially fail in good breeding. As to the modes of it, indeed, they vary according to persons, places, and circumstances; and are only to be acquired by observation and experience; but the substance of it is everywhere and eternally the

same. Good manners are, to particular societies, what good morals are to society in general; their cement, and their security. . . . Mutual complaisances, attentions, and sacrifices of little conveniences, are as natural an implied compact between civilised people, as protection and obedience are between kings and subjects: whoever, in either case, violates that compact, justly forfeits all advantages arising from it. For my own part, I really think that, next to the consciousness of doing a good action, that of doing a civil one is the most pleasing: and the epithet which I should covet the most, next to that of Aristides, would be that of well bred. [*Same date.*]

Books for Oratory. — You have read Quintilian; the best book in the

world to form an orator; pray read *Cicero, de Oratore;* the best book in the world to finish one. Translate and retranslate, from and to Latin, Greek, and English; make yourself a pure and elegant English style: it requires nothing but application. I do not find that God has made you a poet; and I am very glad that he has not; therefore, for God's sake, make yourself an orator, which you may do. Though I still call you a boy, I consider you no longer as such; and when I reflect upon the prodigious quantity of manure that has been laid upon you, I expect you should produce more at eighteen, than uncultivated soils do at eight and twenty. [*Nov.* 24, 1749.]

NICKNAME. — The little defects in manners, elocution, address, and air (and

even of figure, though very unjustly), are the objects of ridicule, and the causes of nicknames. You cannot imagine the grief it would give me, and the prejudice it would do you, if, by way of distinguishing you from others of your name, you should happen to be called Muttering Stanhope, Absent Stanhope, Ill-bred Stanhope, or Awkward, Left-legged Stanhope: therefore, take great care to put it out of the power of ridicule itself to give you any of these ridiculous epithets; for, if you get one, it will stick to you like the envenomed shirt. The very first day that I see you, I shall be able to tell you, and certainly shall tell you, what degree of danger you are in; and I hope that my admonitions, as censor, may prevent the censures of the public. [*Nov.* 26, 1749.]

True Elocution. — What, then, does all this mighty art and mystery of speaking in Parliament amount to? Why, no more than this, That the man who speaks in the House of Commons, speaks in that house, and to four hundred people, that opinion, upon a given subject, which he would make no difficulty of speaking in any house in England, around the fire, or at table, to any fourteen people whatsoever; better judges, perhaps, and severer critics of what he says, than any fourteen gentlemen of the House of Commons.

I have spoken frequently in Parliament, and not always without some applause; and therefore I can assure you, from my experience, that there is very little in it. The elegancy of the style, and the turn of the periods, make

the chief impression upon the hearers. Give them but one or two round and harmonious periods in a speech, which they will retain and repeat; and they will go home as well satisfied as people do from an opera, humming all the way one or two favourite tunes that have struck their ears and were easily caught. Most people have ears, but few have judgment; tickle those ears, and, depend upon it, you will catch their judgments, such as they are. [*Dec.* 9, 1749.]

Poets and Orators. — A man, who is not born with a poetical genius, can never be a poet, or, at best, an extreme bad one: but every man, who can speak at all, can speak elegantly and correctly, if he pleases, by attending to the best authors and orators;

and, indeed, I would advise those who do not speak elegantly not to speak at all; for, I am sure, they will get more by their silence than by their speech. As for politeness; whoever keeps good company, and is not polite, must have formed a resolution, and take some pains not to be so; otherwise he would naturally and insensibly acquire the air, the address, and the turn of those he converses with. [*Dec.* 26, 1749.]

Method of Study — The World and Books. — Your first morning hours I would have you devote to your graver studies with Mr. Harte; the middle part of the day I would have employed in seeing things; and the evenings in seeing people. You are not, I hope, of a lazy, inactive turn, in

either body or mind; and, in that case, the day is full long enough for everything; especially at Rome, where it is not the fashion as it is here, and at Paris, to embezzle at least half of it at table. But if, by accident, two or three hours are sometimes wanting for some useful purpose, borrow them from your sleep. Six, or at most seven hours' sleep is, for a constancy, as much as you or anybody can want: more is only laziness and dozing; and is, I am persuaded, both unwholesome and stupefying. If, by chance, your business, or your pleasures, should keep you up till four or five o'clock in the morning, I would advise you, however, to rise exactly at your usual time, that you may not lose the precious morning hours; and that the want of sleep may

force you to go to bed earlier the next night. [*Same date.*]

Moral Character. — Your moral character must be not only pure, but, like Cæsar's wife, unsuspected. The least speck or blemish upon it is fatal. Nothing degrades and vilifies more, for it excites and unites detestation and contempt. There are, however, wretches in the world profligate enough to explode all notions of moral good and evil; to maintain that they are merely local, and depend entirely upon the customs and fashions of different countries: nay, there are still, if possible, more unaccountable wretches; I mean, those who affect to preach and propagate such absurd and infamous notions, without believing them themselves. These are the

devil's hypocrites. Avoid, as much as possible, the company of such people; who reflect a degree of discredit and infamy upon all who converse with them. [*Jan.* 8, 1750.]

VALUE OF CHARACTER. — Show yourself, upon all occasions, the advocate, the friend, but not the bully, of virtue. Colonel Chartres,[1] whom you

[1] A notorious, wretched debauchee, who has been pilloried into a miserable and degraded immortality by Arbuthnot, Pope, and Hogarth; the painter has given us his portrait in the "Harlot's Progress," plate 1; Pope has set him up as an instance of that hardest trial to good men, the success of the wicked:

"Should some lone temple, nodding to its fall,
For Chartres' head reserve the nodding wall."

And Arbuthnot wrote the most tremendously severe epitaph in the whole range of literature on him while yet alive: "Here *continueth to rot* the body of Colonel Francis Chartres," etc.

have certainly heard of (who was, I believe, the most notorious blasted rascal in the world, and who had, by all sorts of crimes, amassed immense wealth), was so sensible of the disadvantage of a bad character, that I heard him once say, in his impudent, profligate manner, that though he would not give one farthing for virtue, he would give ten thousand pounds for a character; because he should get a hundred thousand pounds by it: whereas he was so blasted that he had no longer an opportunity of cheating people. Is it

Finally Chesterfield points him out to his son, as the most notorious blasted rascal in the world — blasted indeed as by lightning. It is needless to say that this word is not used as a vulgar oath, but to point out a man whose name is, as the Bible of 1551 has it, "marred for ever by *blastynge*."

possible, then, that an honest man can neglect what a wise rogue would purchase so dear? [*Same date.*]

NECESSARY ACCOMPLISHMENTS. — I here subjoin a list of all those necessary, ornamental accomplishments (without which no man living can either please, or rise in the world), which hitherto I fear you want, and which only require your care and attention to possess.

To speak elegantly, whatever language you speak in; without which nobody will hear you with pleasure, and, consequently, you will speak to very little purpose.

An agreeable and distinct elocution; without which nobody will hear you with patience; this everybody may acquire, who is not born with some imperfection in the organs of speech.

You are not; and therefore it is wholly in your power. You need take much less pains for it than Demosthenes did.

A distinguished politeness of manners and address; which common sense, observation, good company, and imitation, will infallibly give you, if you will accept of it.

A genteel carriage, and graceful motions, with the air of a man of fashion. A good dancing-master, with some care on your part, and some imitation of those who excel, will soon bring this about.

To be extremely clean in your person, and perfectly well dressed, according to the fashion, be that what it will. Your negligence of dress, while you were a schoolboy, was pardonable, but would not be so now.

Upon the whole, take it for granted, that, without these accomplishments, all you know, and all you can do, will avail you very little. Adieu. [*Jan.* 18, 1750.]

BIBLIOMANIA. — When you return here, I am apt to think that you will find something better to do than to run to Mr. Osborne's, at Gray's-Inn, to pick up scarce books. Buy good books, and read them; the best books are the commonest, and the last editions are always the best, if the editors are not blockheads; for they may profit of the former. But take care not to understand editions and title-pages too well. It always smells of pedantry, and not always of learning. What curious books I have, they are indeed but few, shall be at your service. I

have some of the Old Collana, and the Macchiavel of 1550. Beware of the *Bibliomanie*. [*March* 19, 1750.]

Learned Ignorance. — A man of the best parts, and the greatest learning, if he does not know the world by his own experience and observation, will be very absurd; and consequently, very unwelcome in company. He may say very good things; but they will probably be so ill-timed, misplaced, or improperly addressed, that he had much better hold his tongue. Full of his own matter, and uninformed of, or inattentive to, the particular circumstances and situations of the company, he vents it indiscriminately: he puts some people out of countenance; he shocks others; and frightens all, who dread what may come out next. The

most general rule that I can give you for the world, and which your experience will convince you of the truth of, is, Never to give the tone to the company, but to take it from them; and to labour more to put them in conceit with themselves, than to make them admire you. Those whom you can make like themselves better, will, I promise you, like you very well. [*Aug.* 6, 1750.]

KNOWLEDGE OF LITERATURE. — A gentleman should know those which I call classical works, in every language; such as Boileau, Corneille, Racine, Molière, etc., in French; Milton, Dryden, Pope, Swift, etc., in English; and the three authors above mentioned,[1] in

[1] Ariosto, Tasso, and Boccaccio; the Orlando, Gierusalemme, and Decamerone.

Italian: whether you have any such in German I am not quite sure, nor, indeed, am I inquisitive. These sort of books adorn the mind, improve the fancy, are frequently alluded to by, and are often the subjects of conversations of the best companies. As you have languages to read, and memory to retain them, the knowledge of them is very well worth the little pains it will cost you, and will enable you to shine in company. It is not pedantic to quote and allude to them, which it would be with regard to the ancients. [*March 2, 1752.*]

NOTHING BY HALVES. — Whatever business you have, do it the first moment you can; never by halves, but finish it without interruption, if possible. Business must not be sauntered

and trifled with; and you must not say to it, as Felix did to Paul, "at a more convenient season I will speak to thee." The most convenient season for business is the first; but study and business, in some measure, point out their own times to a man of sense; time is much oftener squandered away in the wrong choice and improper methods of amusement and pleasures. [*March* 5, 1752.]

Maxims

By the Earl of Chesterfield

A PROPER secrecy is the only mystery of able men; mystery is the only secrecy of weak and cunning ones.

A man who tells nothing, or who tells all, will equally have nothing told him.

If a fool knows a secret, he tells it because he is a fool; if a knave knows one, he tells it wherever it is his interest to tell it. But women, and young men, are very apt to tell what secrets they know, from the vanity of having been trusted. Trust none of these, whenever you can help it.

Inattention to the present business, be it what it will; the doing one thing, and thinking at the same time of another, or the attempting to do two things at once; are the never-failing signs of a little, frivolous mind.

A man who cannot command his temper, his attention, and his countenance, should not think of being a man of business. The weakest man in the world can avail himself of the passion of the wisest. The inattentive man cannot know the business, and consequently cannot do it. And he who cannot command his countenance may e'en as well tell his thoughts as show them.

Distrust all those who love you extremely upon a very slight acquaintance, and without any visible reason.

Be upon your guard, too, against those who confess, as their weaknesses, all the cardinal virtues.

In your friendships, and in your enmities, let your confidence and your hostilities have certain bounds: make not the former dangerous, nor the latter irreconcilable. There are strange vicissitudes in business!

Smooth your way to the head, through the heart. The way of reason is a good one; but it is commonly something longer, and perhaps not so sure.

Spirit is now a very fashionable word: to act with spirit, to speak with spirit, means only, to act rashly, and to talk indiscreetly. An able man shows his spirit by gentle words and resolute actions: he is neither hot nor timid.

When a man of sense happens to be in that disagreeable situation in which he is obliged to ask himself more than once, *What shall I do?* he will answer himself, Nothing. When his reason points out to him no good way, or at least no one way less bad than another, he will stop short, and wait for light. A little busy mind runs on at all events, must be doing; and, like a blind horse, fears no dangers, because he sees none. *Il faut savoir s'ennuyer.*

Patience is a most necessary qualification for business; many a man would rather you heard his story, than granted his request. One must seem to hear the unreasonable demands of the petulant, unmoved, and the tedious details of the dull, untired. That is

the least price that a man must pay for a high station.

It is always right to detect a fraud, and to perceive a folly; but it is often very wrong to expose either. A man of business should always have his eyes open; but must often seem to have them shut.

In courts, nobody should be below your management and attention: the links that form the court chain are innumerable and inconceivable. You must hear with patience the dull grievances of a gentleman usher, or a page of the back-stairs; who, very probably, lies with some near relation of the favourite maid, of the favourite mistress, of the favourite minister, or perhaps of the king himself; and who, consequently, may do you more dark

and indirect good, or harm, than the first man of quality.

One good patron at court may be sufficient, provided you have no personal enemies; and, in order to have none, you must sacrifice (as the Indians do to the Devil) most of your passions, and much of your time, to the numberless evil beings that infest it: in order to prevent and avert the mischiefs they can do you.

A young man, be his merit what it will, can never raise himself; but must, like the ivy around the oak, twine himself around some man of great power and interest. You must belong to a minister some time, before anybody will belong to you. And an inviolable fidelity to that minister, even in his disgrace, will be meritorious, and rec-

ommend you to the next. Ministers love a personal, much more than a party attachment.

As kings are begotten and born like other men, it is to be presumed that they are of the human species; and perhaps, had they the same education, they might prove like other men. But, flattered from their cradles, their hearts are corrupted, and their heads are turned, so that they seem to be a species by themselves. No king ever said to himself, *Homo sum, nihil humani a me alienum puto.*

Flattery cannot be too strong for them; drunk with it from their infancy, like old drinkers, they require drams.

They prefer a personal attachment to a public service, and reward it better. They are vain and weak enough to

look upon it as a free will offering to their merit, and not as a burnt sacrifice to their power.

If you would be a favourite of your king, address yourself to his weaknesses. An application to his reason will seldom prove very successful.

In courts, bashfulness and timidity are as prejudicial on one hand, as impudence and rashness are on the other. A steady assurance, and a cool intrepidity, with an exterior modesty, are the true and necessary medium.

Never apply for what you see very little probability of obtaining; for you will, by asking improper and unattainable things, accustom the ministers to refuse you so often, that they will find it easy to refuse you the properest, and most reasonable ones. It is a

common, but a most mistaken rule at court, to ask for everything, in order to get something: you do get something by it, it is true; but that something is refusals and ridicule.

There is a court jargon, a chit-chat, a small talk, which turns singly upon trifles; and which, in a great many words, says little or nothing. It stands fools instead of what they cannot say, and men of sense instead of what they should not say. It is the proper language of levees, drawing-rooms, and ante-chambers: it is necessary to know it.

Whatever a man is at court, he must be genteel and well-bred; that cloak covers as many follies, as that of charity does sins. I knew a man of great quality, and in a great station at court, considered and respected,

whose highest character was that he was humbly proud, and genteelly dull.

It is hard to say which is the greatest fool; he who tells the whole truth, or he who tells no truth at all. Character is as necessary in business as in trade. No man can deceive often in either.

At court, people embrace without acquaintance, serve one another without friendship, and injure one another without hatred. Interest, not sentiment, is the growth of that soil.

A difference of opinion, though in the merest trifles, alienates little minds, especially of high rank. It is full as easy to commend as to blame a great man's cook, or his tailor: it is shorter, too; and the objects are no more worth disputing about than the people are

worth disputing with. It is impossible to inform, but very easy to displease, them.

A cheerful, easy countenance and behaviour are very useful at court; they make fools think you a good-natured man; and they make designing men think you an undesigning one.

There are some occasions in which a man must tell half his secret, in order to conceal the rest: but there is seldom one in which a man should tell it all. Great skill is necessary to know how far to go, and where to stop.

Ceremony is necessary in courts, as the outwork and defence of manners.

Flattery, though a base coin, is the necessary pocket-money at court; where, by custom and consent, it has

obtained such a currency, that it is no longer a fraudulent, but a legal payment.

If a minister refuses you a reasonable request, and either slights or injures you; if you have not the power to gratify your resentment, have the wisdom to conceal and dissemble it. Seeming good humour on your part may prevent rancour on his, and perhaps bring things right again: but if you have the power to hurt, hint modestly, that, if provoked, you may possibly have the will, too. Fear, when real, and well founded, is perhaps a more prevailing motive at courts than love.

At court, many more people can hurt, than can help you; please the former, but engage the latter.

Awkwardness is a more real disad-

vantage than it is generally thought to be; it often occasions ridicule, it always lessens dignity.

A man's own good breeding is his best security against other people's ill manners.

Good breeding carries along with it a dignity that is respected by the most petulant. Ill breeding invites and authorises the familiarity of the most timid. No man ever said a pert thing to the Duke of Marlborough. No man ever said a civil one (though many a flattering one) to Sir Robert Walpole.

When the old clipped money was called in for a new coinage in King William's time, to prevent the like for the future, they stamped on the edges of the crown pieces these words,

et decus et tutamen. That is exactly the case of good breeding.

Knowledge may give weight, but accomplishments only give lustre; and many more people see than weigh.

Most arts require long study and application; but the most useful art of all, that of pleasing, requires only the desire.

It is to be presumed that a man of common sense, who does not desire to please, desires nothing at all; since he must know that he cannot obtain anything without it.

A skilful negotiator will most carefully distinguish between the little and the great objects of his business, and will be as frank and open in the former, as he will be secret and pertinacious in the latter.

He will, by his manners and address, endeavour, at least, to make his public adversaries his personal friends. He will flatter and engage the man, while he counterworks the minister; and he will never alienate people's minds from him, by wrangling for points, either absolutely unattainable, or not worth attaining. He will make even a merit of giving up what he could not or would not carry, and sell a trifle for a thousand times its value.

A foreign minister, who is concerned in great affairs, must necessarily have spies in his pay; but he must not too easily credit their informations, which are never exactly true, often very false. His best spies will always be those whom he does not pay, but whom he has engaged in his service by his

dexterity and address, and who think themselves nothing less than spies.

There is a certain jargon, which, in French, I should call *un persiflage d'affaires*, that a foreign minister ought to be perfectly master of, and may use very advantageously at great entertainments in mixed companies, and in all occasions where he must speak, and should say nothing. Well turned and well spoken, it seems to mean something though in truth it means nothing. It is a kind of political *badinage*, which prevents or removes a thousand difficulties, to which a foreign minister is exposed in mixed conversations.

If ever the *volto sciolto* and the *pensieri stretti* are necessary, they are so in these affairs. A grave, dark, re-

served, and mysterious air has *fœnum in cornu*. An even, easy, unembarrassed one invites confidence, and leaves no room for guesses and conjectures.

Both simulation and dissimulation are absolutely necessary for a foreign minister; and yet they must stop short of falsehood and perfidy; that middle point is the difficult one: there ability consists. He must often seem pleased, when he is vexed; and grave, when he is pleased; but he must never say either: that would be falsehood, an indelible stain to character.

A foreign minister should be a most exact economist; an expense proportioned to his appointments and fortune is necessary; but, on the other hand, debt is inevitable ruin to him. It sinks him into disgrace at the court

where he resides, and into the most servile and abject dependence on the court that sent him. As he cannot resent ill usage, he is sure to have enough of it.

The Duc de Sully observes very justly, in his Memoirs, that nothing contributed more to his rise, than that prudent economy which he had observed from his youth; and by which he had always a sum of money beforehand, in case of emergencies.

It is very difficult to fix the particular point of economy; the best error of the two is on the parsimonious side. That may be corrected, the other cannot.

The reputation of generosity is to be purchased pretty cheap; it does not depend so much upon a man's

general expense, as it does upon his giving handsomely where it is proper to give at all. A man, for instance, who should give a servant four shillings would pass for covetous, while he who gave him a crown would be reckoned generous: so that the difference of those two opposite characters turns upon one shilling. A man's character, in that particular, depends a great deal upon the report of his own servants; a mere trifle above common wages makes their report favourable.

Take care always to form your establishment so much within your income, as to leave a sufficient fund for unexpected contingencies, and a prudent liberality. There is hardly a year, in any man's life, in which

a small sum of ready money may not be employed to great advantage.[1]

[1] Upon the back of the original is written, in Mr. Stanhope's hand," Excellent maxims, but more calculated for the meridian of France or Spain, than of England."

THE END.

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